

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 MCT-01 /070 W

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R 241520Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2364

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

SECDEF WASHDC

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1964

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: WHO KILLED JUMBLATT?

REF: BIEURT, 1238, 1239, 1240

1. SUMMARY: WE HAVE READ REPORTS FROM CHRISTIAN CIRCLES IN BEIRUT CASTING SUSPICION ON ASAD REGIME FOR PLANNING JUMBLATT MURDER. THESE SUSPICIONS ECHOED IN SYRIA BY SOME OF OUR CONTACTS. EVIDENCE CITED TO DATE, HOWEVER, IS CIRCUMSTANTIAL AND LARGELY SELF-SERVING. DESPITE THEIR DIFFERENCES WITH JUMBLATT, SYRIANS HAVE LITTLE INTEREST IN EXACERBATING INTERNAL SECTARIAN TENSIONS OR IN ALIENATING DRUZE SUPPORTERS OF ASAD REGIME. END SUMMARY.

2. WE HAVE FOUND SOME IN LOCAL SYRIAN COMMUNITY WHO HAVE BEEN SPREADING STORIES ABOUT MOST LIKELY PERPETRATORS OF
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JUMBLATT'S ASSASSINATION THAT CLOSELY PARALLEL VERSIONS PASSED ALONG BY LEBANESE CHRISTIANS IN REFTELS. PERHPAS MORE THAN ANYTHING, THIS INDICATES THAT ASAD'S DETRACTORS ARE WILLING TO PLACE ALMOST ANY FOUL DEAD AT DOOR OF HIS BROTHER RIF'AT.

3. ONE AL-BAATH COLUMNIST GAVE EMBOFF AN OUTLINE OF

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE AGAINST ASAD REGIME AS FOLLOWS:
MURDER OCCURRED NEAR ADF CHECKPOINT, WHICH ENABLED SARG
TO FACILITATE ESCAPE OF ASSASSINS AND WOULD HAVE GIVEN
SARG OPTION OF KILLING ASSASSINS IF ATTEMPT FAILED.
SECOND, HE CLAIMED THAT HELICOPTER HAD APPEARED IN AREA
NEAR LOCALE OF INCIDENT ABOUT AN HOUR AFTER SHOOTING
TOOK PLACE, LANDED AND THEN TOOK OFF AGAIN. HE OPINED
THAT SYRIAN MILITARY WAS PROBABLY TAKING KILLERS TO SAFE
HAVEN. THIRD, HE ASSERTED THAT SYRIAN CONTACTS WITH
JUMBLATT INITIATED SOME TIME AGO HAD BROKEN DOWN IN
FAILURE. JUMBLATT REMAINED SYRIA'S TOUGHEST POTENTIAL
OPPONENT IF FRAGILE CEASE-FIRE BROKE DOWN, IN HIS
VIEW.

4. WE HAVE NOT YET SEEN ANY SOLID EVIDENCE
VARIETY THAT ASAD REGIME, WHICH HAD BESTED
JUMBLATT POLITICALLY OVER ARDUOUS POLITICAL-MILITARY
STRUGGLE IN 1976, PLANNING KILLING OF DRUZE LEADER.
FACT THAT CHAMOUNISTS, WHO ARE JUMBLATT'S NATURAL RIVALS
IN LEBANON, HAVE BEEN SO QUICK OFF THE MARK TO BLACKEN
ASAD'S FACE, WITH WILLING ASSIST FROM IRAQIS WHO CHARGED
THAT RIF'AT HAD PERSONALLY SUPERVISED OPERATION,
SUGGESTS THAT THEIR PRIMARY AIM IN PRESENTING "EVIDENCE"--
WHICH IS NO MORE TANGIBLE THAN DANY'S WORD --
IS TO SHIFT FINGER OF SUSPICION AWAY FROM THEMSELVES.

5. WHAT HAPPENED LOCALLY? WHEN NEWS OF JUMBLATT'S DEATH
WAS REPORTED, ASAD IMMEDIATELY DISPATCHED CONDOLENCE
CABLE TO JUMBLATT'S SON AND FOLLOWED UP BY SENDING HIGH-
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LEVEL SARG DELEGATION LED BY DEPRIMIN FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
JAMIL SHAYYA TO ATTEND FUNERAL. SHAYYA IS A PROMINENT
DRUZE LEADER AND VETERAN BAATHIS WHO WAS REPORTEDLY
BROUGHT IN KHULAYFAW'S CABINET SPECIFICALLY TO ENHANCE
SARG'S ABILITY TO DEAL POLITICALLY WITH
JUMBLATT AND TO SIGNAL SYRIAN DRUZE THAT THEIR CONCERNS
RECEIVING HIGH-LEVEL ATTENTION IN ASAD REGIME. ASAD ALSO
REPORTEDLY DISPATCHED MILITARY INTELLIGENCE CHIEF BRIG.
ALI DUBA TO JABAL DRUZE TO CLAM DRUZE LEADERSHIP, AND FROM
RELIABLE SOURCE WE UNDERSTAND THAT HE ORDERED MILITARY
POLICE COMMANDER RASMI EID TO SEND SOME UNITS OF HIS FORCES
TO JABAL DRUZE IN CASE DISTURBANCES BROKE OUT.

6. CHRISTIAN BISHOP BASED IN JABAL DRUZE TOLD US MANY
LOCAL DRUZE ALSO SUSPECT SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT IN
ASSASSINATION. WE UNDERSTAND CARAVAN OF 100 CARS LEFT
JABAL DRUZE FOR FUNERAL HEADED BY SHIEKH AL-AQL, THE
NEPHEW OF AGED SHEIKH SULTAN ATRASH WHO UNABLE TO MAKE
TRIP. BISHOP HEARD THAT WHILE SHIEKH AL-AQL IN

MUKHTARA HE INDICATED TO THOSE SCREAMING FOR REVENGE THAT PERPETRATORS OF CRIEM RESIDED BEYOND LEBANON. ACCORDING SOURCE, SOME SYRIAN DRUZE ARE HOLDING SYRIA, ISRAEL OR US RESPONSIBLE. SYRIAN DRUZE ALSO RECALLING THAT ONE OF THEIR MEMBERS AVENGED HIMSELF ON FORMER PRESIDENT SHISHAKLI EXILED TO BRAZIL, WHO WAS VIEWED AS ANTI-DRUZE AND RESPONSIBLE FOR EXECUTING SOME MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY. BISHOP SAID THAT SOME SYRIANDRUZE HAD POLITICAL DIFFERENCES WITH JUMBLATT, BUT MOST RESPECTED HIM AND ARE EXTREMELY ANGERED BY HIS MURDER.

7. COMMENT: DRUZE ARE ONE OF MOST COHEISVE RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN THE REGION. THEIR CONCENTRATION IN MOUNTIANS OF SOUTHWEST SYRIA, THEIR REPUTED FIGHTING ABILITIES AND REPRESENTATION IN THE ARMY MAKES DISAFFECTION AMONG THEM CAUSE OF CONCERN FOR ANY SYRIAN REGIME, IF, IN FACT, CONFIDENTIAL

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SUSPICION FOR JUMBLATT'S MURDER CRYSTALLIZES AROUND ASAD OR THOSE CLOSE TO HIM, IT WOULD ADD TO SECURITY PROBLEMS FOR TOP SARG OFFICIALS. MURPHY

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